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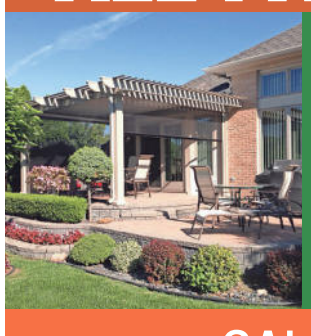

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THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

FRIDAY, MARCH 20, 2020
"Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" II COR. 3:17

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Schools closed till May 1

New coronavirus steps also cancel state testing

Arika Herron and MJ Slaby
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Aldo Medina is worried.

The Arsenal Technical High School senior is due to start college in the fall at Harvard University and there's a chance that, when he does, it'll be his first time inside a classroom in more than six months.

"How am I going to get my diploma?" he wondered after learning that all of Indiana's K-12 schools would be closed until at least May 1. "How is this going to work?"

While Gov. Eric Holcomb hasn't closed schools through the end of the school year, which for Indianapolis Public Schools ends June 4, he made it clear during a press conference Thursday afternoon that it was a distinct possibility.

Many Hoosiers, including Medina, expect that to be the next step the state takes to limit the spread of COVID-19.

Medina already has all of the credits he needs to graduate high school. He's taking all of his courses this semester at IUPUI – which, like most colleges across the country, has already announced it will finish the year online. He's getting a head start on earning college credits, but it still worried about what the extended closure of his high school will mean for him and his classmates.

"I'm expecting that they're going to cancel high school for the rest of the year," he said. "So, for the next six months I'm not going to be in a class-

See SCHOOLS, Page 9A

More coronavirus coverage

- Coach/teacher tests positive. **2A**
- 5 things pregnant women should know. **2A**
- Indiana sees surge in unemployment filings. **2A**
- Coronavirus news and notes. **3A**
- State extending tax filing deadline. **5A**
- Indy African American newspaper holds virtual town hall. 8A. **8A**
- Domestic violence resources. **10A**

PANDEMIC STRANDS HOOSIERS

Four Indianapolis residents are among hundreds of U.S. citizens stuck in Morocco, after the North African country closed its borders earlier this week because of the COVID-19 pandemic. One group was on a 10-city tour of Morocco that began last week. They've struggled to reach the U.S. embassy since the border closure. "We're getting automated emails or recordings when we call," said one of the Indianapolis residents, Karl Mann. He's seen above with fellow travelers at a hotel and at right with his wife, Patricia Scott. **See story, Page 7A**.

PHOTOS PROVIDED TO INDYSTAR BY MIMÌ TÔ (ABOVE) AND KARL MANN

Holcomb tries to lessen financial crush

Does not want to call legislators into session

Shari Rudavsky Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Four days after issuing a series of unprecedented measures designed to curb the spread of the new coronavirus, Gov. Eric Holcomb announced a number of policies aimed at mitigating some of the financial and economic harm those steps could cause.

Holcomb also extended by at least a month the closure of all schools in the state and canceled all testing for schools.

At the same time, he said he would not close all state parks, as Illinois has done; nor issue statewide travel restrictions, as Indianapolis, Fishers and Carmel have done; nor ask Marion County residents to shelter in place the way some counties in the Bay Area are.

"Not at this time, but we're open-minded, and we will respond to the facts on the ground," Holcomb said about the travel restrictions, later adding "we're not there yet" on closing the state parks.

Flanked closely by several members of his administration during a news conference Thursday, Holcomb laid out several measures aimed to ease the toll that the coronavirus outbreak has placed on residents.

These include prohibiting evictions or foreclosures during the public health emergency; extending deadlines to file and pay state income taxes; and interpreting unemployment law broadly to cover those out of work because of the pandemic.

The governor said that at this point he did not think it necessary to call legislators back for a special session to deal with the issues brought on by the outbreak.

"It will have a strain on the budget,

See HOLCOMB, Page 15A

Business shutdown stirs conservative backlash

Ryan Martin
Indianapolis Star
USA TODAY NETWORK

Rep. Jim Lucas, a Republican lawmaker in southern Indiana, fears the impact on small businesses following Gov. Eric Holcomb's order to shut down many restaurants and bars this week.

Rep. Curt Nisly, a Republican in northern Indiana, insists the governor is overreaching on his authority.

And Rob Kendall, a conservative radio personality on WIBC, went so far as to caution: Once you hand over a freedom to the government, you may as well say goodbye to the American way of life.

As medical professionals have warned that a rapid spread of the coronavirus could lead to more patients than there are hospital beds, they have also been urging government leaders to act swiftly to limit public exposure to the virus that causes COVID-19.

But some conservative voices, representing a small but vocal group of Hoosiers, are already bubbling up just days after Holcomb signed his executive order. They are worried about the implications of broad government action during a time of widespread panic

See BUSINESS, Page 4A

USA TODAY

Grim toll: Italy's deaths from virus overtake China's. **6A**

Distracted driving?

Beginning July 1 in Indiana, you won't be able to hold your phone while driving. **Local, 5A**

Weather

High 63° ▮ Low 61°
Showers, very windy.
Forecast, **14A**

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